

A LETTER from John Lacy, to
Thomas Dutton, being Reasons why the
former left his Wife, and took E. Gray
a Prophetess to his Bed.

DEAR BROTHER,

M R. Moulte Yesterday shew'd me one from you, wherein you declare your self more firmly convinced, (than when lately in Town) that the Trial lying upon me, is from the Agency of an evil Spirit; you insisting therein to this Effect, That the Fact it leads to, is as clearly a Breach of the Seventh Commandment, as any other Act could be of the Sixth, or Eighth; That the Case being such, a Superior Power urging that Transgression of a Moral Command, must be an evil one; therefore, without the mitigating Terms of I fear, suspect, or the like, you affirm it as a Matter out of Doubt, that I am, and long have been under the Influence of an unclean Spirit, in this Temptation. And in the Close of that Letter, you desire that I would impart what Light I have into the Thing, further than I had at your Departure hence, about a Month ago.

In answer to your Request, and because your Opinion so peremptory, may very much lead others; as soon as the Business of this Day permitted, I began to digest what follows, the greatest Part whereof is wholly new to my self, since your leaving us; for at that time, until the very Day immediately preceding your Departure, I was willingly ignorant of the Nature of the Case, as it will herein subsequently appear. Only two Hours before my taking Leave of you, I hastily read somewhat in Pool's Synopsis, that gave me some confused Glimmers of it; but that I (as you do) till then, took the State I was in, to be a Temptation or Trial, by a particular, extraordinary Commandment, to violate a standing, general one, several of our Friends, and your self in particular, are Witnesses; being my self, as abovesaid, willingly ignorant that it was otherwise, for my Will so strongly inclined me to oppose, that, (to my Shame I now speak it) I did not give my self Leave, to enquire and search into the Word of God, to be informed distinctly whether it were so, or not; because I would not my self be accessory to the Furtherance of that Trouble and Grief, I accounted (and do still) an Obedience to the imputed Tendency of the Spirit, would bring upon me,

But now, that I am at Liberty to argue on another Foot, you will easily agree with me, that to interpret any Act of the Spirit, to be a Violation of the Decalogue, which is not so, when duly stated, must of necessity be a Crime of a heinous Nature, if stubbornly persisted in, seeing that it charges God wrongfully, to render his Ways odious. And if upon diligent Search into the recorded Revelation of himself, any Act appears dubious and undetermined, whether unlawful or not; in that Case, upon the Authority of Traditional Opinions, Human Comments, or Additions to the Text, to judge conclusively in the harshest Sense, I am perswaded, you will also agree to the unwarrantable; for where the written Oracle is indistinct, or not peremptory, can any thing, merely human, but what derives from the Spirit of Antichrist, set up for Judge decisive?

Less then, that we should fall in with so dangerous a Course of Usurpation in Things pertaining to God, it is no more than requisite for us, with awful Self-Reflection, to look into Ezek. 14. 1—11. in which Text, the Prophet himself, as well as the Enquirer of him touching God, is included in the Warning against setting up HIS IDOLS in his Heart; where the Word IDOLS in the 70 Gr. is rendred v. 6. ADDED INVENTIONS (Schemes or Systems) and v. 4. IMAGINATIONS (or Thoughts) so that the true Prophet, when he appealed to the previous Record of God's Testimony to Men, for Examination of his own Mission, he appeal'd to the simple and unmixed WORD, without submitting to (much less imbibing) the added Inventions and Imaginations of Men on it; and if others, or the Prophet himself, were prepossess'd with Schemes of their own, by which they would examine and judge the existent Spirit of Prophecy, there is in that Text, a most severe Commination of God denounced.

Having necessarily premised these Things, we come now to consider more nearly the Point under Debate; which, without Recital of it, you will doubt less allow, does fall under one of these two Denominations, viz. A Temptation to, either a Plurality of Wives, or of Divorce, (whether the One, or the Other, be within the Terms of violating the Seventh Commandment, may be questionable. These however are very distinct and different, one from the other: The former allows an universal Indulgence to the sensual Appetite, so far as the Man is able to provide for, and maintain his several Wives, the latter preserves the Singularity of the Pair; for in a lawful Divorce, which is the sole Master of Debate) it must be granted, that the Parties are thenceforth accounted as if reciprocally dead, so that upon no Account, they can never come together, or be rejoined again: If you recollect the Case at present under Debate, you will find that by all the Circumstances of it (at large see before you and others) it does plainly come under the Head of Divorce, and therefore ought not to be puzzled with Texts and Arguments that properly belong to a Plurality of Wives. Our Saviour mixes indeed the two Cases, which was pertinent and just in respect to the Jews, because they allowed both, and were by the Law warranted to do so; and upon any other Occasion of Time or Place, wherein both are under Question, the like Method of reasoning is seasonable and pertinent: But in the Case in hand, which is plainly limited to lawful Divorce, it is not just or equitable to entangle ourselves, with what pertains only to a Plurality; of this Sort, are those

Texts

Texts quoted by you, From the Beginning it was not so; God made them Male and Female, And they two shall be one Flesh; and also your Comment thereon, That our Saviour's new Prescription leads to bring Men back to the State of Innocence: Where (by the Way) if you mean the State of Man before the Fall, then our Lord's allowing of Divorce, in Case of Fornication, cannot consist with your System; for in that State, there could, nor can possibly be, any such thing, as Fornication.

I do beg of you, therefore, Dear Brother, by the Bowels of Christ, and for the Love of the Spirit, and in Compassion to me your distressed Fellow-Labourer, that you will forbear henceforth to perplex the Matter in Question, with what does not properly belong to it. If ever the Case of Plurality of Wives be super-added to the present, then indeed the full Scope of your arguing will be seasonable and pertinent, as it was under the Law, and in our Saviour's Time.

In the mean Time, we ought with Calmness to weigh only That, which the occurring Occasion requires, for our Search into Gospel-Truth; but the loading and blinding the Enquiry, by twisting and complicating therewith, any thing of a different Denomination, is the usual Artifice of Sophistical Reasoners, by that Means to lead away and captivate undiscerning judgments; tho' it is no such thing in you; but I know, your deep Concern for possible Consequences, and vehement Ardor against any thing having but the Appearance of evil, and fervent Zeal for the Glory of God (as apprehended by you) have herein carried you, to overlook untravily the Distinction of the Cases above-mentioned.

I must crave Leave to add also, before we proceed to pursue the Point in hand, that as to all the Energy wherewith you inculcate the strictest Holiness and Purity, I perfectly join with you; and God be Praise'd, under whose Inspection my Heart always is, that the present long and sore Trial, has not in the least impaired, but rather improved the constant Thirst and Application of my Soul, to be holy as He is holy; nevertheless, we know very well, that the Declamations for Perfection and superlative Holiness, are often pointed against our selves, by the Opposers, to shield them from the Force of those Arguments, that would otherwise convince them of Guilt, in opposing and rejecting the Authority of the Prophetick Spirit, whom they ought to submit to, and obey, as their rightful Lord. As the false Apostles, assuming the like specious Appearances, charged St. Paul, as if he walked according to the Flesh, and as if the Tendency of his Doctrine was, Let us do Evil that Good may come; In like manner, the Pharisees clothed themselves with long Robes of Light, viz. frequent Fastings and Prayers, Alms, strict Observances of the Law, Reverence of the Sabbath, Abstinence from lewd and profane Company, and the like, and under this Disguise, they could justify themselves before Men, for opposing and rejecting the GREAT PROPHECY; and our Lord represents them saying of Himself, Matth. 11. 19. Behold a Man Gluttonous, and a Wine-bibber, a Friend of Publicans and Sinners: And (xai) Wisdom is justified of her Children, (meaning themselves.) Wherefore, since common and general Declarations for Holiness, do determine nothing distinctly, touching a Prophetick Appearance, as in the Instances here given; but as they often pervert and confound Men's Judgment, in respect to the particular Point in Question, so as St. Paul mentions his possibly being accounted a

Reprobate, I must here in also beg you to abstain a little, till the Case be clearly discussed, whether in it self, evil, or not.

Having thus far in the Premises, attempted to obviate and expose the indirect Courses of arguing decisively from merely human Authorities, and Opinions precarious; as also against the intermixing of Cases that are different, and the using of common Declarations, to evade and puzzle a scrupulous Enquiry into a particular Truth; we now come to examine That, wherein the whole Stress lies, viz.

First, Whether a Divorce is justifiable by the Gospel, upon any other Foot than that of Adultery. And,

Secondly, Whether the Spirit extraordinarily may not command it, but for that sole Cause.

Upon the first Head, viz. Whether a Divorce is justifiable by the Gospel, for some other Cause besides that of Adultery. You alledge that the several Texts of Mat. 5. 32. and 19. 4. — 9. Luke 16. 18. Mark. 10. 11, 12. are express, that marrying again upon a Divorce is Adultery, unless the former Bond of Marriage was dissolved by Adultery: For say you, The Fornication in those Texts mention'd means Whoring, and the Whoring of a married Woman is undoubtedly Adultery.

That Adultery dissolves the matrimonial Covenant, is undoubted; but whether That only does so, is the Question here. You positively take the Affirmative, and I on the contrary assert, that the Texts aforesaid do not at all conclude so. The Words are Math. 19. 9. Whosoever shall put away his Wife; except for Fornication, and shall marry another, committeth Adultery. Fornication in its proper Signification, is the Coition of one unmarried Person with another, and so a married Woman cannot be guilty of it, which creates a Difficulty in the Text. Nevertheless, seeing He that was Wisdom it self, and had the Spirit beyond Measure upon him, made Choice of that Word, we ought to believe it was, not without reason; tho' if the sole Meaning of our Redeemer by it, was as you say, Adultery; it is altogether unaccountable for Him, to express Adultery by a Word, which in its Propriety, cannot possibly mean so: Nay, it is an Absurdity in the Term, such, as I know not, where it can be parallel'd in Holy Writ. We ought, therefore, to examine, whether the Word cannot be taken in another Sense, which has less of Absurdity in it, and is reconcileable to the Subject of that Text. And if it may admit of a larger Extent, then the Word of our Redeemer cannot be limited and restrained, especially to so barbarous a Construction, without evident Marks of Man's usurping an Authority that belongs not to him; whether this crawling Worm (Man) has lift up it self, to confine and restrain the Word of our God in this Text, we appeal to Scripture, as the sole decisive Judge (with the Prophetick Spirit) it being agreed by all Christians, that, Scripture is the best Interpreter of Scripture.

First, Then the Matter critically turning on the Word *porneia*, Fornication, I wish you, and all those that confine it to Adultery, would try to produce one Text throughout the Old and New Testament, wherein it expresses Adultery. I do solemnly protest, I know not of one single One, wherein it does so. And as my Great God and Saviour has of his peculiar Grace, signified to me by Revelation, that the Word does not signify Adultery in this Text, I do impart to others the Light I have received: And for

the Vindication of the SPIRIT, whom my self, with others, have the Honour to serve, I do herein lay before you many other Places, wherein Fornication is not limited to a Defilement of the Marriage-Bed. As First, all those Texts, wherein Adultery and Fornication are mentioned together, and yet as distinct Crimes: This indeed would have very little Weight, but to shew the Impropriety of making them mean one and the same Thing, therefore, Secondly, in 1. Cor. 5. 1. he that hath Married his Mother-in-Law, is charged with Fornication, whereas, his Father being dead, At could not be Adultery; nor, as he was Married to her, could it be Fornication or Whoring; but if you please to inspect Mr. Lock's Comment on that Text (whom I have heard you own the best Interpreter of the New Testament) he tells you, the Word *porneia*, rendered by us Fornication, is frequently used by the Writers of the New Testament, in the same Sense with the Hebrew Word, which signifies any flagitious, scandalous Crime. Thirdly, in Pursuance of Mr. Lock's Observation, there is a remarkable Instance in Judges 19. 1. 2. where, the Levite's Wife, a Concubine (as the Margin has it, and as Keturah, called Abraham's Wife, Gen. 25. 2. is called his Concubine, v. 6.) played the Whore against him; there the Hebrew Word, translated played the Whore, is by most of the 70 Greek Copies, rendered, was angry with him: So that a Wife quarrelling and forsaking his Bed, is accounted to have played the Whore; that is, she was guilty of one of those flagitious, scandalous Crimes against her Husband, which are comprehended in a Hebrew Word, that answers to *porneia*, Fornication. Fourthly, in 1. Cor. 5. 9, 10. the General Injunction not to accompany with Fornicators, shews that the Word Fornication is there to be taken in a large Extent for scandalous, infamous Men, and so they are called the Fornicators of this World, and are distinguished from Covetous, Extortioners and Idolaters, (who were not infamous among the Heathen:) And if we restrain Fornication in this Text, to private Bodily Defilement, the Injunction not to accompany with them, would have no certain Sound, because they cannot be known. Fifthly, what confirms the larger Extent of the Word *porneia*, Fornication, in the New Testament, is the Use of it in a Spiritual Sense in several Places, more particularly Revel. 2. 28.--23. where if you please to look into Mills's Gr. you will find the Woman was call'd Jezabel, because She, as a Prophetess, was a Teacher of evil Things: And the English Text plainly enough intimates, that her seducing of Men into Error, was the Fornication she is charged with.

So that Scripture being universally granted to be the best Interpreter of Scripture, I could add more, but think the Matter sufficiently clear'd by these Quotations; that to confine the Word, Fornication in the Text, under Debate, is without the Testimony of any other Scripture to back it, and therefore is antisciptural; and to allow a larger Extent to the said Word is synonymous with many other Parts of Scripture; and so by the Test of the best Interpreter, ought to be allowed for the truest Sense of that Text. But there are many other Things concur to shew, that *porneia*, Fornication, Matth. 19. 9. ought not to be taken for a Defilement of the Marriage-Bed, but allowed a larger meaning, in that Place. And

First, For the right understanding of any Scripture, the Context ought to be strictly weigh'd, and here in the 4th Verse; the Question was; the Pharisees said unto him, Is it lawful for a Man to put away his Wife

for

for EVERY CAUSE? Touching which, observe, that the Enquirers were the strictest Moralists among the Jews, and as such, may be well conceived to have some Scruple and Disputes upon that Foot, whether every Cause, Arbitrary, or the meer Pleasure of the Husband, were sufficient by the Law of Moses, Deut. 24. 1. to put away his Wife; that of Deuteronomy, 'tis plain, being very indistinct as to the Cause, left them a very great Latitude, which the corrupt Ages of the Jewish Church had (as the Reports of that Matter among the Jews are handed down to us expressly) so interpreted, that nothing further was required, for a lawful Divorce, than the Husband's giving a publick Writing of Dismissal to her: But the Pharisees, the strictest Set for Morality, put it as a Question, whether it were LAWFUL for every Cause; where, the Thing or Subject of the Question is, the Writing of Dismissal or Bill of Divorce, whether that was lawful, and not as you have confounded it, as if the Punishment of an Adulteress was any Part of the Question: But as the Question stands, Is it lawful for a Man to put away his Wife for EVERY CAUSE? The Answer, Whosoever shall put away his Wife, except for Fornication, and shall marry another, committeth Adultery. The genuine Sense of the Context, shews, that Fornication stands opposed therein, to EVERY CAUSE; thereby this Text, according to the Harmony of Scripture, limited the licentious Practice of the Jews, and even affixt to the indistinct Text of Deuteronomy, the Terms of any turpid or vile Behaviour of the Wife to her Husband, as the only lawful Cause prescribed by our Saviour (but I say unto you) for Divorce under the Gospel. Wherefore, if the Context does any ways assist, in understanding the meaning of the Word Fornication, it is so far from meaning nothing else but Adultery, that Adultery does not at all come within the Question, to which the Text is an Answer.

2ly, That Fornication, *πορνεία*, in the Text under Consideration, is not to be construed a Defilement of the Marriage-Bed, but to be interpreted to any heinous Transgression, or flagitious Misbehaviour of the Wife to her Husband, such as violates the Marriage-Vow and Band of Amity and Love, appears in this, that to limit it to Adultery, contradicts the Purpose of our Saviour abovementioned, of enjoying a higher Degree of Sanctity under Matrimony, than the Law of Moses, for that made Adultery, either in the Man or Woman, to be Death, Levit. 20. 10. this Sense, affixt to the Text of our Lord, makes the Woman (in whom the Crime is more pernicious) upon the utmost proof, to be only liable to a Divorce; But, as you have brought the Story of the Adulterous Woman, John 8. 1, --- 11, to back your Interpretation, I desire you, Dear Brother, to look into Dr. Mills on that Text, and you'll find those eleven Verses entirely omitted in 18 of the antient Copies, tho' he quotes 17 younger or later ones, which have (conveniently for the Doctrine you espouse) transmitted that whole Story to us; nevertheless, as to that Text, 'tis easily maintainable, that from the beginning it was not there; and at the writing this very Clause, I have an extraordinary Testimony by Vision, to confirm the same.

3ly, That *πορνεία*, Fornication, ought not to be construed Adultery, in the Text, as the sole Cause of Divorce; it is of great weight to observe, that in 1 Cor. 7. 15. St. Paul expressly handling the Relation of Man and Wife, says, If the unbelieving depart, let him depart; a Brother or a Sister

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Sister is not UNDER BONDAGE in that Case; that is, be or she is at liberty from the Matrimonial Yoke, and if he be at Liberty, he may marry again; so that here is one Case, very different from that of Adultery corporal, to which you would alone confine Divorce.

4ly. What concludes beyond Contradiction rational (with the preceding Evidence) that the Word *πορνεία*, Fornication, in the Text now in question, cannot be taken in the Sense of Adultery, as the sole Cause of Christian Divorce, is, that the Greek Christian Emperors, and the Greek Church Councils, did for several of the early Centuries, expressly allow Divorce upon several other Causes, specified in their Decrees, whereof History will furnish an entire Volume; so that the Greeks being allow'd to understand the proper meaning of the Word *πορνεία*, we must say, it has been chiefly the Roman Babylonish Where, that has perverted and corrupted (by arbitrary Interpretation, the Text now before us, and thus Dr. Mills builds his Sentiment for retaining the Story of John 8. upon the Vulgar Latin, though St. Hierom notes the same as an egregious Supputation, in it; and having devised a System from this execrable Fountain, we have not stuck to confirm the same, by a presumptuous making the Oracles of God Himself, in Modern Translations, to speak directly the contrary to what it is in Malac. 2. 16. where the Hebrew and Greek Septuagint agree, That the Lord the God of Israel saith, if thou hate her, put her away; and yet after all, so great is the force of Truth, that even in the Latin Church, and the Dregs of Antichristian Ages, there does not want even a Multitude of Instances, which History can furnish us, of Divorce allowed for other Causes, besides that of Adultery, to which you would absolutely restrain it.

Since therefore, Sir, I was my self ignorant, as you yet are, and have by the pressing Necessity of my own Case, under the Direction of Visionary Manifestations, been forced in my Will to scrutiny the Scriptures; if you find the Discoveries herein cited, satisfactory to your Conscience, as they are unto mine entirely; then you will doubtless (as by your Prophetical Call you ought) put away the old Leaven, or Doctrine of the Priests, built only upon the Tradition of the Elders, which has corrupted the Word of God; and agree with me, that the Gospel of Christ does allow Divorce, in other Cases, besides that of corporal Adultery.

Seeing then, that by the Scripture, Christian Divorce is allowable for other Causes, besides that of Adultery; the Second Question, Whether the Spirit extraordinarily may not command it, otherwise than for the Cause of corporal Adultery, falls to the Ground; for if in the common Way, a Man for other heinous Offences against the conjugal Vow, might in the pursuance of his own Right, put away his Wife by the Gospel-Law, much more may the Lord, the Spirit, summarily command a Man to do it; and this by the Gospel uncorrupted, would be incontestible, especially if on the Wife's part any Conduct had openly appeared, destructive of the Matrimonial Bond and Vow of Love and Amity, and that upon the very Spirit's account, before such Command extraordinarily given.

As to an extraordinary Command by the Spirit, I refer you to Pool's Synoplis, which is the best Collection of Remarks upon the Texts of Scripture, by the critically learned in the Original Tongues, who are of most universal Esteem among Divines. From their Annotations it appears, that Isaiah viii. 3. Hosea iii. 1, 2, 3. Hosea i. 2. import three several Marriages appointed or order'd by the Spirit extraordinarily. Their

Their Annotations on Hosea i. 2. are in substance as followeth. The Words of the Text are; The Beginning of the Word of the Lord in Hosea; and the Lord said to Hosea, Go, take unto thee, a Wife of Whoredoms and Children of Whoredoms, for the Land hath committed great Whoredom; departing from the Lord; so he went, and took Gomer the Daughter of Diblaim. And had three Children born of her.

"Children of Whoredoms, is by Grotius and other Annotators, taken to regard those born after the Marriage, to which Children the Sign given to *Israel*, by subsequent Prophecy is affixed. Others say, the Words belong to the Life of *Gomer* before the Marriage, and her Children then. A Wife of Whoredoms means a most infamous Degree of that Crime in her, and those who argue her to be scandalous as a publick Harlot before Marriage, allow that a Wife of Whoredoms does imply, that she continued that vicious Course after Marriage with *Hosea*, as Chap. ii. 2, 5. Now (say they) this Marriage appears inconsistent with the Prophetick Office, for such a Marriage is forbidden to the Priests, Lev. xxi. 7. (and a Prophet is not less holy to his God) and to Ministers, 1 Tim. iii. 4, 5. and even to all Christians, 1 Cor. vii. 39. An Adulteress was to be put to Death by Lev. xx. 10. A Child of Whoredoms to be excluded the Congregation for ten Generations, Deut. xxiii. 2. So that the marrying and cherishing a Wife of Whoredoms, and Children of Whoredoms was unlawful. And lastly, it evidently contradicted or widely disagreed with the Scope and Purport of that Marriage, as a Sign. For the Jews might craftily answer, *As thou keepest thy naughty Wife and Children, so will the Lord do by us, and then thy self are a Sign contradictory to thy Words*, Chap. i. 6. 9. On Account of these Absurdities and Difficulties, many of the Annotators say, the whole Account is but a Relation of what pass'd in Vision only, and was not Fact. To which the most do answer, That there is no mention made of *Hosea's* ever having a Vision, but the Word of the Lord *IN HIM* means an internal Inspiration; besides (say they) the Words are positive, that he went and took *Gomer* the Daughter of *Diblaim*, and the describing the Woman by her Name, and her Father's Name, is what never occur'd in Scripture in the Mention of a Visionary Representation; nor could a Vision be a Sign given out and set before the People, as Prophetick Signs always were. Moreover (say they) we ought never to depart from the literal Sense of Facts recired, without the utmost Necessity, for thereby many other Accounts of the Prophetick Signs would be evaded and destroyed. Some would excuse the Fact of *Hosea*, as not sinful by the Law, because *Salmon* married the Harlot *Rahab*. To which others answer; *Salmon* was a Layman, *Hosea* a Priest or (tantamount) a Prophet, *Rahab* became holy, *Gomer* continues a Whore under Marriage; and *Hosea* is given as a Sign of God's dealing with the Church (his Wife,) and that he will reject her for Adultery, appears by 2 Cor. xi. 2. Upon the whole; most, nay even all Annotators do agree, that *Hosea's* Marriage, in its attending or subsequent Circumstances was sinful by the standing Word

" Word of God, and the Upshot or conclusive Determination of theirs,
 " in the Matter, is, That the Command to *Hosea*, was of a Thing
 " against the Law and good Manners, if he had done the same of
 " his own Head, or for his own Lust, but when God commands ex-
 " traordinarily, the very things that otherwise were unlawful and ab-
 " surd, by that very commanding, they become both lawful and
 " comely [*honesta* ;] such as the maiming or wounding the Prophet,
 " 1 Kings xx. 35, 36, 37. the tearing of King *Jeroboam's* Garment,
 " 1 Kings xi. 30. *Abraham's* Endeavour to kill his Son, the *Israelites*
 " pilfering the Egyptians ; wherefore the Marriage of *Hosea* could be
 " no other than lawful and comely, or [*honourable* ;] because God
 " commanded it.

N. B. If the Marriage of *Hosea* was lawful only because commanded,
 how would these Annotators on the Text have been satisfied, it was so com-
 manded, seeing that the same Verse says, It was the Beginning of the
 Word of the Lord in *Hosea* ? viz. Internal Inspiration, not corroborated
 by Vision, Voice from Heaven, nor with any preceding Evidence of that In-
 spiration, and never afterwards confirmed by Miracle. But when *Hosea*
 came to reprove the Priests severely in the Person of God, as Chap. iv. 6,
 11. would they not have joined in the Outcry. Chap. ix. 7, 8. The Prophet
 is a Fool, the Man of the Spirit is mad ; he is as the Snare of a Fowl-
 ler, in all his Ways ; [*let him be*] a Hatred in the House of his God.

But those that believe they are under the immediate Direction and Gui-
 dance of God extraordinarily, as you and I do, ought to be very jealous of
 suffering the Authority of our GREAT MASTER to be injured and maim-
 ed. Now to deny him the Privilege of acting by summary or absolute Au-
 thority, is indeed in Effect, to deny and refuse our Master to have any supreme
 or divine Authority at all, which is to betray and renounce the Validity and
 Sufficiency of our own proper Call ; and this in the Case under Consideration,
 serves more especially to be well weighed, because in the corrupted and
 apostatized State of Things, not only what ought to be allow'd, as sufficient
 Matter of Divorce by the Gospel, is deny'd, but even that, which they
 themselves grant to be a warrantable Cause, viz. Adultery, (tho' never so
 clearly prov'd) is not permitted to take Place, without the whole Nation's
 Approbation, upon a chargeable and hazardous Debate ; and then only made
 valid, by an Act of the Legislature, a Law made expressly for every single
 Person.

You know, the manner of the Prophetick Spirit is and ever was to restore
 Things that were corrupted, and to bring them back to the Original Stan-
 dard, which under Christianity, must be the plain uncorrupted Word, and
 the Presidency of the Spirit ; the latter is the Testimony of Christ's Presence
 with his Church ; and in all Cases, where the written Word is dubious or
 indistinct, there an Evidence of the Spirit's Dictate ought to be esteem'd of
 greater Weight and Authority than the Prescription and Comments merely
 human. St. Paul, upon the Subject of Marriage, says, This is a GREAT
 MYSTERY, (which is not said of any other particular Thing in the New
 Testament) but I speak concerning Christ and the Church, whom else-
 where he calls a chaste Virgin espoused unto Christ ; and St. John in the Re-
 velations, and also all the Gospels, have the like Emblematical Symbol of the
 Bridegroom and Brides. To apply therefore the Relation Matrimonial to that
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GREAT MYSTERY, Adultery in one bears a Parallel (in many) Scriptures) to Idolatry in the other; so that without manifest Idolatry, by your System, Christ cannot put away his Church, which does not at all agree with Rom. 11. where the Jewish is put away for Unbelief, and the Gentile Church threaten'd there with rejection, if she also should fall into the same. Wherefore the Wife is to be subject to the Husband as the Church to Christ, and the Man to love his Wife as the Lord did the Church, and does; but if the Wife cannot bear the Presence of her Husband without Disdain, and daily Insults of his Superintendence; if she withdraw both her Affection and Esteem, nay even her Body from him, if she render his very Abode in his House intolerable, if she rob him of his Propriety, how does all this bear regard to the **GREAT MYSTERY**, whereof Christian Marriage only in the Lord (says St. Paul) is an Emblematical Union. In fine, however others, still under the Apostacy, think of these Gospel Precepts, it does not become us any ways to vilify the Authority of Christ the Sovereign Head, who may give her, the Church, a Bill of Divorce, for other Crimes besides gross Idolatry, and in this mystical Spiritual Sense, if the Church visible depart from her sole Adherence and Esteem due to Him, she is called a **Babylonish WHORE** that is to be destroyed; and these that come out of her, when the Spirit saith Come, are to be formed as a Bride prepared for her Husband; but if Idolatry is to be taken in the gross Sense of that Word, I know of no Whore of Babylon now, or that ever was in the Church.

The preceding Paragraph may serve to shew, that ~~reprefa~~ Fornication, taken in a larger Sense, for the Cause of lawful Divorce, does better comport with the **GREAT MYSTERY** emblem'd by the Conjugal Union, than to take it as only limited to Corporal Adultery, which would leave Mystery Babylon only definable by Idolatry in the grossest Sense. But to return to the Case of Literal Marriage and Divorces, how happy would it be that Adultery were represented to all Persons entering into that Estate, in its black Colours and due Desert of Death without Mercy, as by the Law of Moses, not in the least Tittle abolish'd by our Lord: And how blessed a Face of Things must it introduce, to have the lawful Gospel Causes of Divorce insisted upon, that both Man and Wife might mutually study, with all their Might, to be acceptable and pleasing one to another? What a Heavenly Life then would the Conjugal be, and not terrifying and so dangerous as now, to enter into? Nor is the Rule of the Gospel, in this Case, as above interpreted and explained, partial to the Man; for by Mark x. 11, 12. the Woman also upon like Just Causes, is privileged to put away her Husband the different Circumstances of the Relation being duly consider'd. This would surely be a most blessed State of Things, if we make Restrictions upon the Miseries that the limiting of Divorce to Corporal Adultery has introduced, seeing that the great Crime of Adultery it self, is now, by that means, become a very Jest among Christians. And by the same Means, there being no redress or remedy for lesser Crimes, the World is deluged with Torments, by that very Union which is constituted by God, for the perfection of Human Felicities.

Thus, having at large examin'd the Case of Marriage and Gospel Divorce as a General Doctrine and corrected Institution of Christ, I have no Commission from the Spirit to urge it as incumbent upon all, but I leave it to be consider'd by others, whether the Principles herein insisted on, be not much more
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advancing of Purity, and consonant to the Truth as it is in Jesus; that those herein censured, if you, after perusing them deliberately, persist to think otherwise; you will do well to undeceive me; but if upon mature deliberation, you acquiesce in these Sentiments, it will certainly follow that the particular Case of the Spirit under consideration, is widely differing from what you assert in your Letter, viz. That it is as plainly a Breach of the Seventh Commandment, as any other Act could be of the 6th, and 8th; nay, on the contrary, it does not so much as come within the denomination of commanding the Violation of any Moral Precept of the Old or New Testament; but is defensible by Christian Morality, in the strictest Sense, if we take the sincere Word of God, for the Touchstone to try it by, and the primitive Ages for our aid therein; and is condemnable only upon the Foot of Interpolations, Adulterations of Scripture, superadded Institutions of Antichristian Ages, meer humane Politicks, and Usurpations against Christ in his Word written, and the Lord the Spirit presiding in the Church.

So then, if my Conscience in the Sight of God acquits me, that for above 23 Years of the Matrimonial State, I have not once ever violated my Conjugal Vow, and that I am now no ways influenced by base and filthy Lusts, and that no secret displeasure towards my Wife, has any part in this matter, but whatever misbehaviour hath been on her part, I for my part have forgiven it sincerely, even as I hope for true forgiveness of my many Offences against God himself; this being the Case, as I have often declared, and do now solemnly appeal to the Righteous Judge, who will avenge it upon me, if it be not; then the Trial is wholly of a Spiritual Nature, and ought to be taken for a Case extraordinary; and as the Angelick or Superior Power, which brings it on me, is assuredly attested to me, to be the very same Spirit's Operation, that I have openly avowed for Divine, I am willing to submit the Matter, to the Decision of the same Spirit, which I believe to be on you and many more, as the Divine President over us; in this Occurrence it is a very small matter to me, to be censured by Man's Judgment, and I ought not, if it were your Case, what now is mine, to determine by my personal Reasoning; in the mean time, till the thing be decided by the Spirit in other Prophets, what would you have me do, who am intirely perswaded in my own Mind, that it is the Spirit of God? The Word of the Lord, by Samuel, is positive, that Disobedience to an immediate Command (and the particular Command there, was as exceptionable by Saul, as this to me, if given) is no less a Crime than Witchcraft, (viz. a voluntary compact with the Devil) and stubborn opposition to it, parallel with Idolatry; what do you think? Are Idolatry and Witchcraft, small Crimes? Are they not rather damnable, and such as incur assured everlasting Miseries? Would you have me then, for fear of Consequences among Men, run the risque of that irretrievable Experiment? No! put it to your own Conscience, and I know you would not.

But to conclude; as to all due fear and caution there needs little Argument, and you may be well assured thereof because you are fully acquainted with the Circumstances of the Person, whom the thing most nearly concerns; it is in vain, to apologize for my self to Men, if all be clear upwards, it is enough; and as long as the omniscient Eye is witness that I have unto this Moment, such Complacency in my Wife, that I would not for all other possible Considerations forsake her, but merely in Obedience to his

his unquestionable Command, what shall I say? you know our Redeemer's Words, That he who forsaketh not Brother and Sister, Wife and Children, Houses and Lands, and all that he has (valuable in this World) for his sake, is not worthy of him; if the Trial then upon its distinct and accurate Consideration, comes to terminate solely upon this Point, as from the Examination and Discussion of it herein at large, I am at length (thru' the Grace of God to me) fully assured, it does; I hope, I shall have Faith given me, to remove those Mountains, if ever by a peremptory Demand, my Obedience is required; and in this posture of things, I request your Answer hereto, with Prayer, on my part, that God would please to reveal himself even in this matter to you, as I beg yours for me, your (at present) grieved, but ever in Duty, and by the Spirit bound to be,

S I R,

Your kindly Affectionate Brother in Christ,

JOHN LACY,

Since this Letter I have receiv'd, by diverse Ways of Divine Manifestation, Orders to do what is this Day done; the last of which Orders was by a supernatural outward Voice heard, that threaten'd me with Eternal Destruction and Hell-Fire if I disobey'd; wherefore believing it the Word of Him, who hath Power to inflict the same, I could not but subject my self to the Father of Spirits, in firm Hope to live by Faith.

March 6. 1711.

John Lacy.



